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ABSTRACT

The Douglas Education Service District, Winston Dillard School District, and the Special Education Department at Douglas High School in Winston, Oregon, developed a community-based education program that emphasizes ongoing job training for students with mental disabilities and the development of competitive employment in the community. The program is called the Community Transition Training Center (CTTC) and is housed at the Wildlife Safari in Winston. The CTTC is part of a seven-part training sequence involving these components: (1) classroom instruction; (2) integrated vocational classes; (3) campus work experience; (4) job training at the CTTC; (5) work experience in the community; (6) supported employment in the community; and (7) competitive employment. Steps two and four are unique to this program. The Wildlife Safari has successfully hosted job training students for more than 4 years. Students now attend training sessions in the restaurant, mechanics/welding shop, building maintenance, and gift shop. Staff members of the department conduct the training with minimal interaction by school personnel. A step-by-step training approach has been developed emphasizing cooperation between school officials and training site staff. This program demonstrates what can be accomplished when schools, employers, and public agencies work together to provide the educated work force needed for the future. (KC)

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COMMUNITY BASED TRAINING CENTERS FOR THE VOCATIONAL TRANSITIONING OF STUDENTS WITH MENTAL RETARDATION

by Robert D. Craft, and Theodore Martch

The Douglas Education Service District, Winston Dillard School district and the Special Education Department at Douglas High School in Winston, Oregon developed a community based education program. This program emphasizes the ongoing job training for students with mental disabilities,and the development of competitive employment in the community. The community based program is referred to as the Community Transition Training Center (CTTC). Specifically, the CTTC currently is housed at the Wildlife Safari in Winston, Oregon.

The CTTC is part of a training sequence outlined below:

1. Classroom instruction
2. Integrated vocational classes
3. Campus work experience
4. Job training at the CTTC
5. Work experience in the community
6. Supported employment in the community
7. Competitive employment

* The level of disability may dictate a change in the sequence and management approach.

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Most programs for students with disabilities involve steps 1,3,5 and 6, with mild success in 7. Steps 2 and 4 are the unique elements used in the Douglas High School program, which minimizes step 6, and enhances success in step 7. This paper will focus on the variations created in steps 1,3, and 5 as well as the new elements.

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION introduces the new student to the program. In the Vocational Resource Center (VRC), the student is given batteries of assessment tests and an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed in cooperation with families and the school district. The IEP is designed to reflect a survey of interest and general ability. The interest and ability survey conducted at Douglas High School involves observation of voluntary conversation and behaviors exhibited by the students in an integrated, "free to interact" atmosphere. Students are encouraged to join in activities that appear interesting to them, generally as observers or as an incidental activity. Students in the VRC are instructed in reading, math and living skills from packaged classroom curriculum guides. In addition, the students are required to be part of the weekly class meeting forum, where they hold office, make reports and vote on issues of interest to the class. The class meeting is also a forum for solving problems that affect the class or the students.

In addition to classroom instruction, students operate a student business which they named the Community Vocational Student Services (CVSS). Through this business, students earn money for their program by; sales of Christmas trees, Crafts fair boothes, and the student run plant store operated at the Wildlife Safari. Students manage the business by maintaining business logs, ledgers and inventory reports. The students participating in campus work experience at the school greenhouse raise the plants for sale in the plant store, and work shifts in the store, actually conducting customer services. Funds raised by the plant store are shared with the Wildlife Safari.

INTEGRATED VOCATIONAL CLASSES are developed in the Agricultural Sciences and Technology, Woods, Metals and Home Economics classrooms. The primary area of work at Douglas High School is in the Ag Sciences area, where a modified curriculum is adapted to the special needs student. The normalized course description is rewritten to provide a guide for evaluating the special needs student in the classroom. Along with the special needs student, peer partners are enlisted through a cadet teaching class. These cadet teachers attend the classes with the special

needs students, and assist with assignments, projects and tests. The cadet teachers are evaluated in the classroom according to their work with the other students, as well as performance in the class. Emphasis is placed on involvement and creativity as they work with the students.

When the special needs student reaches the maximal learning experience for the topic being covered in the classroom, the cadet teacher and a teaching assistant remove the student from the classroom for the modified element of the curriculum. This element includes hands-on application of learned subject matter, and a scaled down explanation of the class materials. The student will return to the classroom for the beginning of the next segment, after completion of a modified test that is taken concurrently with the rest of the class.

CAMPUS WORK EXPERIENCE is available for the student who has attended integrated classroom instruction. The student is given the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge gained in the classroom through supervised tasks on campus. The student works with a teaching assistant and other vocational students to conduct tasks on the school land lab, cafeteria, office or other sites.

JOB TRAINING AT THE CTTC provides the student with a work experience site under actual job conditions. At the CTTC, skilled trainers determine appropriate job descriptions for the student, and set up a program of progressive loading so the student can reach his/her potential. Trainers as well as students are selected and coached by staff at the High School Special Education department and the appropriate Vocational Department. Frequent adaptations are made to determine the competitive capabilities of the student. The main purpose at the CTTC is to determine a non-supported competitive career goal for the student. The details of how this is accomplished will be covered later in the paper.

WORK EXPERIENCE IN THE COMMUNITY allows the student to demonstrate the "modified" job description developed at the CTTC. At the work experience site, the student is supervised by an employee of the community business. The staff at the High School make routine checks on performance, but otherwise, the student is under the direction and control of the work experience site. Evaluations are made and reccomendations will determine the fittness of the student to be competitively employed.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT in the community is set up in cooperation with public agencies such as the Oregon Department of Mental Health. Private agencies such as Umpqua Training and Employment also assist with payroll re-imbursements. The supported work program makes it possible for the student who has special needs to continue at the work site to receive further training needed for independant competitive employment.

COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES are developed while the student is in the CTTC. The job description for which the student is to be trained is introduced to the area businesses to determine the need, and possible employment opportunities. The supported programs described above are used as incentives for the employer to test the job need interpretation made by the CTTC, and set the stage for non-supported employment.

The Wildlife Safari has hosted job training students for over 4 years, where the concept of the CTTC evolved using existing facilities and staff. The variety of training opportunities and educational programs along with a stimulating environment has proven to be a successful site for job training. Initially, job training was limited to the Horticulture department. As students demonstrated their willingness to learn and to work, other departments have become active in the training programs. Students now attend training sessions in the restaruant, mechanic's/welding shop, building maintenance and gift shop. A staff member of a department is selected to conduct the hands on training of the student, with minimal interaction by school personnel, who provide information on medical, educational, and behavior matters. Through the Safari training program, a step by step training approach has been developed. The steps in chronological order are as follows.

STEP 1: A staff person from the VRC at Douglas High School visits a potential work experience site. The site manager provides a detailed job description, and instructs the staff visitor on how and where the work is to be done.

STEP 2: The nature and volume of the work is compared with the abilities and interests of students on hand. Part of, or all of, the job description is matched with a student or students. A work experience coordinator is assigned to the work experience site as a consultant.

STEP 3: The student, or students, in step 2 are assigned to the CTTC for training for the specific job description outlined for them during step 1. The CTTC staff tries to duplicate the job placement. The job description is broken up into distinct stages, and introduced in succession to the student. When the student becomes proficient in a stage, the next stage in introduced, and performed along with stages already learned until all stages can be accomplished in the proper order within determined time limits.

STEP 4: After completion of the CTTC training period, the student is introduced to the work experience site. Due to the training already given, the employer is not burdened with costly initial training of the student. The student is prepared, and needs minor adjustments to adapt to the new environment. School personnel are available to the work experience site for assistance in the transition, and for periodic assistance to help correct problems that may arise.

STEP 5: After completion of the work experience step, the student encounters the following opportunities:

a. Continue at the work experience site in a supported work program through public and private agencies. These programs provide wage re-imbursements to the employer to cover the costs of any further training that may be necessary, determined on an individual basis, and agreed upon by both the employer and the agency.

b. Competitive employment at the work experience site or at a new site.

c. Employment in a sheltered workshop, in the event that the student is unable to perform the job tasks with the required proficiency.

d. Conduct a competitive job search process including resumes and employment applications.

Throughout the five step program, the students are evaluated to determine their potential for success. On an individual basis, students who are not able to carry out an individualized job description may be more suited to a crew job assignment. A crew assignment would be a job that

involves more than one student doing a specific task that is needed by a community business or organization. The crew would proceed through the 5 step program outlined above for individual job placements. The need for a trained supervisor for the crew is possible, and through job coaching programs with the Oregon Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, a job coach could be assigned to a group of students.

Students, or crews of students, will find a variety of job characteristics in the community, such as full time, part-time, seasonal, and supplemental. Supplemental jobs are those that involve an employer who, for whatever reason, finds a need for temporary help during peak activity. Businesses such as nurseries, row crop farms, greenhouses and city parks departments, often find themselves with short term projects that require personnel in addition to the regular full time staff. The students who complete initial CTTC training can return to the CTTC for a short course to prepare them for an upcomming temporary job description.

The training program described here can be expanded to include students who are not diagnosed as having mental retardation or other special needs. These students could elect to attend training in their own special field of interest provided that there are available skilled trainers and a community need. Whichever group of students is to be served, the success of the program hinges on the abilities of the Vocational Teachers, teaching assistants, students and the willingness of the schools and the community to accept responsibility for the training and education of the upcomming workforce. The responsibility for eduation does not rest on the schools alone, but is to be shared by schools, community and public as well as private agencies. Money alone is not the solution, but the efficient use of available money and community resources can resolve many of the dilemmas encountered by the business community in it's search for a skilled and willing entry level workforce.